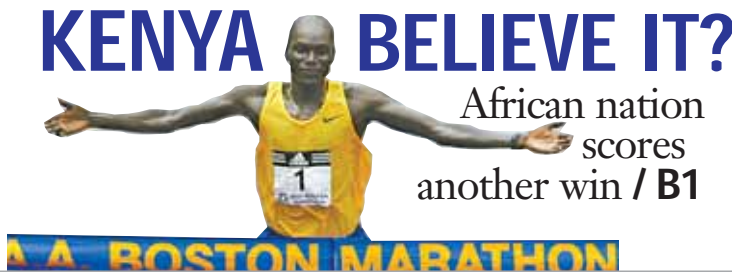


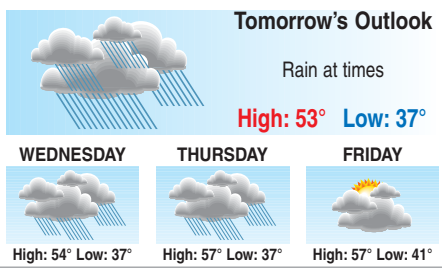


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Gunman kills dozens at Va. Tech

It is the deadliest campus shooting in U.S. history

BLACKSBURG, Va. (AP) — A gunman opened fire in a dorm and classroom at Virginia Tech today, killing at least 30 people in the deadliest shooting rampage in U.S. history, government officials told The Associated Press. The gunman was killed, bringing to death toll to 31, but it was unclear if he was shot by police or took his own life.

"Today the university was struck with a tragedy that we consider of monumental proportions," said Virginia Tech president Charles Steger. "The university is shocked and indeed horrified."

The name of the gunman was not immediately released, and investigators

offered no motive for the attack. It was not immediately known if the gunman was a student. FBI spokesman Richard Kolko in Washington said there was no immediate evidence to suggest it was a terrorist attack, "but all avenues will be explored."

The shootings spread panic and confusion on campus, with witnesses reporting students jumping out the windows of a classroom building to escape the gunfire. The bloodbath took place at opposite sides of the 2,600-acre campus, beginning at about 7:15 a.m. at West Ambler Johnston, a coed dormitory that houses 895 people, and continuing about two hours later at Norris Hall, an engineering building about 2,000 feet away, authorities said.

Police said they were still investigating the shooting at the dorm when they got word of gunfire at the classroom

building.

After the first shots were fired, students were warned to stay indoors and away from the windows. But some students said they thought the precautions had been lifted by the time the second burst of gunfire was heard.

Some of the dead were students. One student was killed in the dorm, and the others were killed in the classroom, Virginia Tech Police Chief W.R. Flinchum.

Up until Monday, the deadliest campus shooting in U.S. history was a rampage that took place in 1966 at the University of Texas at Austin, where Charles Whitman climbed the clock tower and opened fire with a rifle from the 28th-floor observation deck. He killed 16 people before he was shot to death by police.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

An injured man is carried out of Norris Hall today at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va.

See SHOOTING on A11



MARK YLEN/DEMOCRAT-HERALD

Engine 4449 chugs out of Albany

Twins Casey and Melissa Smith, 5, and their 8-year-old brother Kyle wave to Chief Engineer Doyle McCormack on Sunday morning as the Southern Pacific 4449 passes by the Marion Street crossing in Albany. The children were among approximately 100 spectators who watched the world-famous steam locomotive begin chugging its way back to Portland. The engine was in Albany so a crew could use the Portland & Western Railroad's repair shop to replace a bearing on one of the engine's 80-inch steel wheels.



Stories of heroic action flow at vets' reunion in Albany

BY JENNIFER MOODY
ALBANY DEMOCRAT-HERALD

Thirty-nine years later, the grenade still tears at him.

There isn't much to tell, Melvin "Mike" Hewitt insists. He was 34, a first sergeant in Charlie Company, 1st of 8th Infantry. They were in Vietnam, in a firefight, trying to hold a hill.

A and C companies were both there but the enemy overran them. Hand to hand combat. Noise. Confusion.

He was in a shell hole with perhaps half a dozen men when the grenade came in. He remembers covering it with his legs. There wasn't time for more.

"I got wounded," he says tersely, jerking his head at the man sitting next to him. "He helped take care of me."

His jaw clenches, his voice breaks. He's done talking about it.

Eric Czernowski of North Albany understands. He was the medic for the company that day,



HEATHER LEMAY/DEMOCRAT-HERALD

From left, Eric Czernowski of North Albany, Robert Maxwell of Bend and Mike Hewitt of Umatilla pose for a photo in Albany Saturday outside of the Best Western Inn.

and Hewitt, who covered the grenade with his body to save his fellow soldiers, was his first sergeant. Hewitt now lives in Umatilla.

Robert Maxwell, of Bend,

knows, too. He also covered a grenade with his body to save the lives of his fellow soldiers — in Besancon, France, during World War II.

The three men were among

about 50 veterans who gathered in Albany at the VFW hall this weekend for the twice-yearly reunion of the Northwest chapter of the Army 4th Infantry Division.

Nobody but a veteran understands a fellow veteran, the men gathered in the hospitality room of the Best Western Inn agree. That makes reunions the best place — sometimes the only place — to share the stories of their service.

Maxwell received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions, the highest military decoration awarded by the United States. He is currently the only Medal of Honor recipient living in Oregon.

Maxwell was with the 3rd Infantry Division that day in 1944. It was a pitch-black night, he remembers. They were under heavy fire. "Incoming everything from 20 mm anti-aircraft to rifle machine guns and grenades."

He remembers the grenade falling in the midst of his squad. He vaguely remembers trying to

find it in the dark and throw it back, then realizing there wasn't time.

The Army knows what happened next: Maxwell grabbed a blanket and threw himself on the grenade.

All Maxwell remembers is coming to and discovering he was alone, left for dead. He wandered into a nearby house where his platoon leader was picking up the last few pieces of equipment.

"We did a three-legged race up the road, the Germans firing at us the whole time," Maxwell recalls. "I'd have been captured or killed if it wasn't for him."

The Medal of Honor is supposed to be presented by the president. But in May 1945, Roosevelt had died and Truman was just taking over, so Gen. G.W. Danielson, the commandant of the Colorado Army Divisions, made the presentation.

See VETERANS on A11

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